

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 2 October 2012 from the Permanent Representative
of Guatemala to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of Guatemala, the Security Council will hold an open debate on "Women and peace and security" on Monday, 29 October 2012. The basis of the debate will be the Secretary-General's report. However, in order to help steer the discussions on the subject, Guatemala has prepared the attached complementary note (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Gert Rosenthal**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 2 October 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Complementary note for the open debate of the Security Council on "Women and peace and security"

The role of women's civil society organizations in contributing to the prevention and resolution of armed conflict and to peacebuilding

1. The implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) relies upon strong collaboration between Member States, international and regional security institutions, and civil society. The significant work of women's civil society organizations in conflict situations is all the more extraordinary in view of the fact that they are frequently excluded from formal conflict resolution processes, political dialogue, and post-conflict peacebuilding systems, including the mechanisms and institutions responsible for implementation of peace accords and post-conflict planning processes. On the other hand, their central role in community reconciliation and long-term conflict prevention is often unrecognized or ignored. As a consequence, women's organizations are often taken for granted and underresourced.

2. The Guatemalan presidency of the Security Council will convene on 29 October 2012 an open debate on women and peace and security. The basis of the debate will be the Secretary-General's report, which, as part of its analysis, places a specific focus on the role of women's civil society organizations in contributing to the prevention and resolution of armed conflict and peacebuilding. The open debate will provide a forum for the Security Council, Member States and other stakeholders to review progress achieved and discuss ways of addressing key challenges in implementing commitments on women and peace and security, in particular, the role of women's civil society organizations in situations of armed conflict and peacebuilding.

3. This open debate will review the crucial role that women's civil society organizations can play in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. It will identify areas of good practice that should be supported by Member States and scaled up. It will review means of overcoming the considerable obstacles (security threats, lack of resources, displacement of members, and lack of information) that often impede women's groups from effective engagement in formal conflict resolution and peace consolidation. While the Security Council has previously held an open debate on the role of civil society in conflict prevention and the pacific settlement of disputes (2005), the open debate of 2012 will be the first to consider the specific role played by women's civil society organizations in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery.

4. Within the topic of supporting women's organizations in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and in accordance with the Secretary-General's report, three sub-themes can be highlighted:

(a) **Implementation of peace accords.** The commitments made in peace accords are implemented via a range of mechanisms and institutions (for example,

commissions for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; security sector reform; law and constitutional reform; transitional justice mechanisms and so on) that provide opportunities for citizen engagement and can broaden the social base invested in sustaining peace. Women's organizations can play a crucial role in ensuring that these implementation arrangements are responsive to the needs of women citizens. As direct individual participants in peace implementation arrangements, women civil society leaders can help build their responsiveness to the broader constituency of women citizens. Women's organizations can also play an external observer role of monitoring the functioning of these implementation mechanisms and building accountability. Member States are invited to consider means of contributing to an enabling environment for these implementation mechanisms.

(b) **United Nations transitions, including mission drawdown.** The challenge of ensuring smooth transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and further development stages is a matter of considerable concern for Member States and international and national stakeholders. Mission drawdown offers an opportunity to consolidate gains achieved during the peacekeeping period. It also presents risks that progress, especially on women's rights, can be eroded because of volatile security and political dynamics. There is some concern that mission drawdown can be associated with a drop in levels of funding and attention to gender equality commitments, and an erosion in levels of security and protection for women. Women's groups have an important role to play in encouraging sustained commitments to gender equality in these transitional periods. Member States are encouraged to discuss the implementation of women and peace and security resolutions within the framework of mission drawdown, transitions, and handover of functions to other United Nations actors and national authorities and the role women's organizations can play in informing these processes.

(c) **Security environment for women's civil society organizations.** Women's organizations in contexts of armed conflict and post-conflict situations are at times subject to specific security threats. Even when participating in peace processes and in post-conflict peace accord implementation agreements, women civil society leaders can be subject to intimidation and harassment, particularly in societies in which these women are playing non-traditional roles. Concerted attention must be paid to the protection of women's groups and women human rights defenders to ensure that threats to their security do not impede their participation in conflict resolution and political processes, including transitions. Member States are asked to share good practices in supporting a sustained protection environment for leaders and members of women's organizations.

5. Finally, members of the Security Council and other Member States are invited to consider the following issues:

(a) Means of building women's organizations' engagement in the implementation of peace agreements;

(b) Good practices in integrating women's security and other priorities into transitions such as mission drawdown planning and benchmarking;

(c) Means of ensuring protection of women's human rights defenders in conflict and post-conflict settings.